

Application No. 09/856,384
Applicants: K. Motegi et al.

Remarks

Claims 1-9, 12-17, 20-21, 24-25, 27-37, and 38-47 remain in the application. Claims 10-11, 18-19, 22-23, and 26 have been canceled. Claims 27-37 have been withdrawn. Claims 38-47 are new.

Applicants request reexamination and reconsideration in view of the amendments and arguments herein.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1-9, 12 -17 and 24-25 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Nishi (U.S. Patent No. 6,335,787). Additionally, claims 1-5, 9, 13-17, 20-21, and 24-25 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Magome et al. (2002/0145711). For the reasons set forth below, applicants believe that the claims remaining in the application are patentable.

Nishi discloses a projection exposure device including a gas changeover device (120A) which supplies nitrogen gas from a second air conditioner (117) to an illumination system unit (111), a reticle stage system unit (112), a wafer stage system unit (114) and a wafer transfer system unit (115) when an ordinary exposure sequence is performed. The gas changeover device (120A) also supplies ozone-free air from a first air conditioner (116) to the illumination system unit (111), the reticle stage system unit (112), the wafer stage system unit (114) and the wafer transfer system unit (115) when maintenance or experimental exposure is performed (see column 27, lines 34-53). Nishi also discloses a concentration sensor (137A-137D) installed in the illumination system unit (111), the reticle stage system unit (112), the wafer stage system unit (114) and the wafer transfer system unit (115) near the respective exhaust openings for monitoring whether the nitrogen concentration in each unit reaches the level of nitrogen concentration in ordinary air (see column 27, line 61 to column 28, line 7).

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Magome et al. (2002/0145711) discloses an exposure apparatus for providing helium gas to a case (1), a sub-chamber (6) and a projection optical system (PL) and providing nitrogen gas to an environment chamber (7) (see paragraph [0065] and [0069])

However, neither Nishi nor Magome et al. discloses changing a connection between the first purge mechanism and the second purge mechanism based on a detection result of the operation condition detecting mechanism as recited in amended claims 1 and 14.

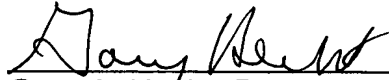
Furthermore, neither Nishi nor Magome et al. discloses changing a connection between the first purge mechanism and the second purge mechanism based on a detection result of the exhaust monitor as recited in new claims 38 and 43. Accordingly, the present invention is believed to distinguish over Nishi and Magome et al.

As a 35 U.S.C. §102 rejection requires that all elements be disclosed in a reference, and elements are missing from the references as discussed above, independent claims 1, 14, 38 and 43 are believed patentable. The remaining claims, depending from the independent claims, are likewise believed patentable, and are also believed patentable based on the additional elements and limitations contained in each of the claims. Accordingly, applicants request allowance of claims 1-9, 12-17, 20-21, 24-25, and 38-47.

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Applicants respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Respectfully submitted,



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